

Pickwick

Charles Dickens.

Mr. Pickwick belongs to the sacred figures of the world's history. Do not, please, claim that he has never existed: the same thing happens to most of the world's sacred figures, and they have been living presences to a vast number of consoled wretches. So, if a mystic can claim a personal acquaintance and clear vision of the Christ, a human man can ~~claim~~ claim personal acquaintance and a clear vision of Mr. Pickwick.

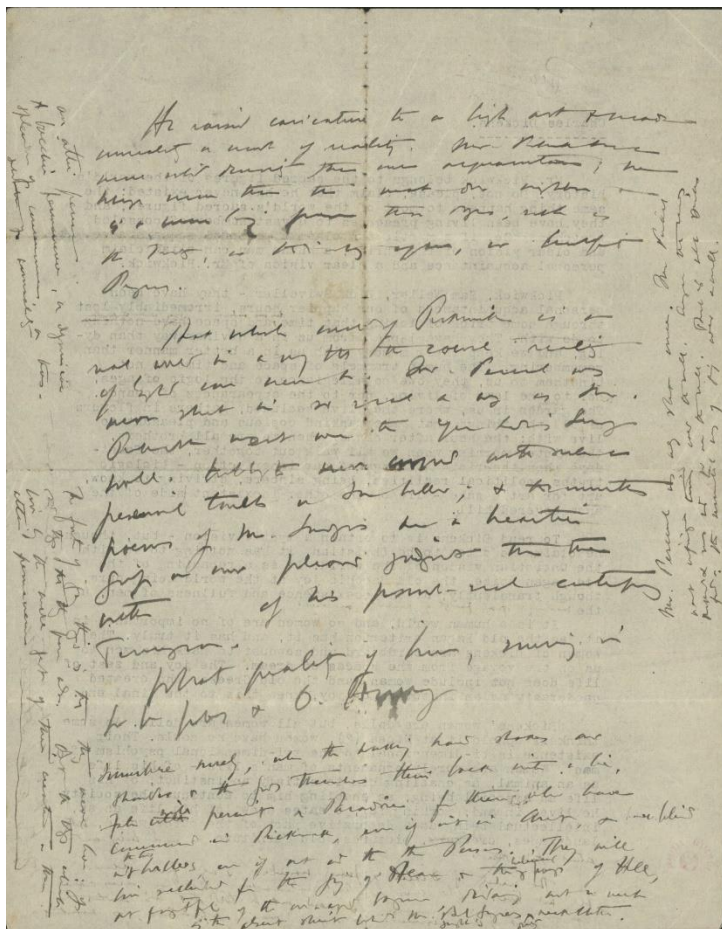
Pickwick, Sam Weller, Dick Swiveller - they have been personal acquaintances of our happier hours, irremediably lost through some trick of losing that time does not measure and space ~~have~~ ~~nothing to do with~~ does not include. They have lapsed from us in a diviner way than dying, and we keep their memory with us in a better manner than remembering. The human trammels of space and time do not bind them to us, they owe no allegiance to the logic of ages, nor to the laws of living, nor to the appearances of chance. The garden ^{/where we were all children ever by virtue\} in us, where they live secluded, gathers in flowers of all the things that make mankind copious and pleasant to live with: the hour after dinner when we are all brothers, the winter morning when we all walk out together, the feast-days when the riotous things of our imperfection - biologic truths, political realities, being sincere, striving to know, art for art's sake - lie on the inexistent other side of the snow-covered hills.

To read Dickens is to obtain a mystic vision - but, though he claims so often to be Christian, it has nothing to do with the Christian vision of the world. It is a recasting of the old pagan noise, the old Bacchic joy at the world being ours, though transiently, at the coexistence and fullness of men, at the glad meeting and sad parting of perennial mankind.

It is a human world, and so women are of no importance in it, as the old Pagan criterion has it, and has it truly. The women of Dickens are cardboard and sawdust to pack his men to us on the voyage from the spaces of dream. The joy and zest of life does not include woman, and the old Greeks, who created pederasty as an institution of joy, knew this to the final end.

Dickens' women are dolls, but all women are dolls. As some thinkers upheld it at Nicea (?), women have no souls. Their existence is bi-dimensional to the tri-dimensional psychism of men. Women are merely ornaments to man's life - of his life as an animal, as enabling him to satisfy an instinct, of his life as a social being, as enabling him to continue the society he lives in and, working for, creates anew, of his life as an intellectual being as a decorative part of the outer world, with landscapes, crockery, china, pictures, old furniture, no more living and actual than these.

The reality of Dickens is purely masculine and only feminine where it will not live. Who cares for his sentiment that has any care at all for his humour. I need not be told that his sentiment is part of his humour. So may a man's holiness, as important say, be the less of his mysteries and we adore the mysteries and but the ~~no~~ substantial holiness.



He raised caricature to a high art and made unreality a mode of reality. Mr. Pickwick has a more solid density than our acquaintances; he belongs more than the next-door neighbor and is a more living person than dozens, such as the Trinity, [*or the divinity of men, or benefit Progress.]

That whole world of Pickwick is a real world in a way that the coarse reality of England can never be. Mr. Perceval was never shot in so real a way as Mr. Pickwick went over the young ladies Seminary wall. Thereby to men unused with such as perennial truths on Sam Weller; and the unworthy poems of Mr. Snodgrass are as hearten gossip on our pleased judging the true worth (...) of his pseudo-real contemporary Tennysson.

What quality of him, surviving in W. W. Jacobs and O. Henry {...}

Somewhere surely, when the waking hand shakes our shoulder and the gods themselves their back into a lie, Fate will will permit a Paradise for them who have communed a Pickwick, even if not in Christ, and have believed in the true Weller's, even if not in the three Persons. They will live secluded from the joy of Heaven and the [*bellowing] pangs of Hell, not forgetful of the one-eyed bagman, disdaining not so much as the absent shirt behind Mr. Jingles [Jingel's] dirty neck cloth.

Mr. Perceval was only shot once. Mr. Pickwick went infinite times over the wall. Everyone that reads Pickwick sees him going over the wall. That is what Dickens found: the sentimental way of going over a wall.

The fate of gay things is that they never live: of sad things that they pass also. But the things which live by mere gest of their creator as those attain permanence an attic permanence. A Bacchic permanence, a dyonisiac splendor of consciousness, a trans-substantiation of personality (...)

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